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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 1940

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "THE HOUSE THAT JANE WOULD BUILD." Information from the Office of Experiment Stations, U.S.D.A.

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The house that Jane built might be quite different from the house that Jack built--if Jane could have it her way. For Jane's work of keeping house gives her special ideas about the house she would like to build. Jane, the housekeeper and homemaker, knows whether she prefers a house of one story or two; bedrooms upstairs or down; where she wants her laundry and whether she wants a basement. Jane has her own ideas about dining rooms, breakfast nooks, and combination living and dining rooms. She knows how she would arrange a five-room house. And she has ideas about the right size for a living room and a bedroom.

But who knows what Jane's ideas are? Who knows what Jane as the typical farm housewife wants? Housing experts--North, East, South and West--have been studying farm housing problems and working to help farm families have better homes. For example, at the Wisconsin Experiment Station they have been studying how to build farm houses suited to that region, and at the Arkansas Station they have been designing houses farmers themselves can build of native materials. But has anybody studied what Jane wants in a house?

Maude Wilson and Laura Wells at the Oregon Station recently asked Jane in the person of 450 rural housewives in different parts of the State. They put the question like this: "If you were planning to build, what kind of house would you want?"

The answers they received give a picture of the house Jane would build if she was a homemaker on a farm in that section of the country.



According to the 450 replies Miss Wilson received, Jane's house might be one or two stories. Half of these Oregon housewives voted for a one-story house; the other half for two stories. Women with young children were generally in favor of a house all on one floor. Women with no children were more likely to prefer an upstairs.

And Jane's house would have a basement. Homemakers in this study were generally agreed on a basement. In fact, four out of five, both on farms and in town, said they wanted a house with a basement.

Jane's house would have one bedroom on the first floor. Ninety-nine out of a hundred of these homemakers voted for a bedroom on the first floor. But two-thirds of them wanted only one first-floor bedroom and preferred to have other sleeping rooms upstairs in a two-story house. Women with small children were the ones who favored more than one bedroom on the first floor.

Jane herself would sleep in that first-floor bedroom, according to Oregon opinion. Both farm and town housewives favored a sleeping room downstairs for themselves as a time and step-saver.

As for the laundry in the house, Jane might have it in the basement or on the first floor. Half of the housewives voted for a basement laundry; a third for a laundry on the first floor separate from the kitchen. A few said they would be satisfied with an open porch as a place to wash. And a very few voted for a separate building as a wash house.

Since pioneer days women have complained about having the men wash up in the kitchen. So you won't be surprised to know that Jane's house has a separate wash-room for the men on the first floor. Oregon housewives voted 231 to 1 for a place outside the kitchen for the men to wash. Half of them spoke up for a separate room on the first floor; and a third for an open porch. Those who wanted the washstand on the porch lived in the mild climate of southern Oregon.

In these days when so many of the new small houses condense dining space, you may be surprised to learn that Jane's house has not only a separate dining room but room for a full-size family meal table in the kitchen. The majority of the housewives who answered Miss Wilson specified both a dining room and a table for serving family meals in the kitchen. The idea of using part of the living room for eating was not popular. Only 1 to 8 voted for a living-dining room. Women with children especially wanted a separate dining room and dining space in the kitchen. The large majority of the women said they would like to serve 2 or 3 meals a day in the kitchen in cold weather, and would use the dining room more in warm weather. About half of them also wanted a porch or terrace to serve family meals or crews of farm workmen in good weather.

Modern magazines often suggest a combination kitchen, dining and living room for small houses. This idea does not appeal to Jane. Most of the women reporting in this study had lived in houses of 5 rooms or less and knew the problems of small space. But most of them voted in favor of a room set aside for cooking even in the smallest house, and against one main room for living, eating and cooking.

Here's how Jane would arrange a 5-room house. She would have a kitchen, a dining room, 2 bedrooms and a living room that could be used for sleeping if necessary. Most Oregon housewives voted this the best arrangement for a small house.

As for the size of the rooms, Jane's living room is 20 feet long and either 14 or 16 feet wide. These are the dimensions most favored by housewives in this study. Jane's bedroom dimensions are 12 by 14. This was the size wanted by 422 of the 450 homemakers who answered Miss Wilson.

Well, there you have a little picture of the house that Jane built in her mind's eye. The picture gives you an idea what typical farm homemakers in one part of the country at least would like if they could build a house to suit themselves. And now you've heard her ideas, do you agree with Jane?

